

ADVOCATES

“Building Strong Communities”

2006 Foster Care Review Board Annual Conference

By Lisa S. Vosburgh, Editor

Local Review Board Members, Foster Care Review Board staff, invited speakers and guests met in Columbia on April 28th for the 2006 Annual Conference. This year's conference, “Building Strong Communities”, focused on collaborative efforts between child welfare agencies and non-profit community organizations aimed at improving the system of care for foster children in South Carolina.

After viewing a music video promoting adoption, “God Bless the Children” by country music recording artist Wayne Warner, **Millie Qualls**, RB Coordinator, was recognized for her many contributions to the South Carolina Heart Gallery. Mrs. Qualls has spent countless hours assisting DSS in coordinating photo shoots, recruiting photographers and volunteers, and scheduling local gallery locations. She also enlisted the help of her husband Robert to design and launch the scheartgallery.org website. The website features photographs of children available for adoption and information on adoptive resources.

During the first session, “Collaborating with Community Private Non-Profits”, panelists **Sue Oliver**, Director, VOICES for South Carolina's Children; **Becky Airheart**, Director, South Carolina Children's Trust Fund; and **Gloria Morris**, Director, Prevent Child Abuse South Carolina, detailed the purpose and mission of their individual organizations. They also fielded questions about child welfare resources and activities involving local community groups.

Ronnie Huffman, Director, Children's

Services, SCDSS; **Carl Brown**, President, Foster Parent Association; and **Louise Cooper**, Director, GAL Program, discussed “The Value of Community Partners Meetings: A State Level View”. The panel discussed the importance of community foster care stakeholders attendance at quarterly meetings.

One of the high points of this year's conference was having **Congressman Joe Wilson** address the group during lunch. The National Ad Hoc Committee, formed by the State Board of Director's in 2004, had as one of it's goals to establish relationship's with SC's Congressional Delegation in order to create a voice for children's issues at the national level through the Foster Care Review Board. Each member of the SC Congressional Delegation was contacted by letter and we received one response to our request for a meeting. It came from Congressman Joe Wilson and he agreed to meet with us to discuss issues, as well as address the conference as the luncheon speaker.

Congressman Wilson is a native of South Carolina and long time resident of Lexington County. He has worked with Review Board Staff on many child welfare issues and Review Board appointments during his tenure in the South Carolina Senate from 1985 to 2001. Elected to Congress in 2001, he continues his strong commitment to constituent service.

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SOUTH CAROLINA
GOVERNOR'S OFFICE

Division of Foster
Care Review

Mark Sanford, Governor

Volume 20, Issue 2

Summer 2006



Congressman Joe Wilson with
Carolyn Payton-Pinson, RB 10B (left)
Joan Youmans, RB 14A (right)
Review Board Members of the Year



Congressman Joe Wilson
MaryAnn Riley, RB 7B

Children's Foster Care Review Board Mission Statement

The Foster Care Review Program provides an external system of accountability and advocacy for children and families involved with the foster care system. The Division utilizes panels of community volunteers to promote safe, permanent homes for children in foster care in a timely manner and to increase public awareness regarding the impact of child abuse and neglect.

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Directly Speaking ... Details From Denise

By Denise Barker, Director

"The pessimist complains about the wind; the optimist expects it to change; the realist adjusts the sails." W. A. Ward

The reality of budget allocations to the Review Board convinced me that it was time to readjust the sails once again if the Review Board is to continue meeting our statutory mandate – that is providing timely reviews of children in foster care. The growing number of children in the foster care system is putting a huge strain on several Boards – extra meetings, extremely long days, add up to an ever-increasing workload on both volunteers and staff – all of which endanger our ability to maintain our high standards.

Unfortunately, when needs increase in one area and funding does not, something must be cut out! After much discussion about the best use of limited resources, the decision reached was not to renew our contract with the SC Department of Health and Human Services for the Medicaid Review program. This contract was cut by more than 1/2 last year and the proposed contract budget for 2006-2007 was to be for an even smaller total amount. We re-evaluated the State dollars allocated in our budget as matching funds for the contract and determined that better outcomes were possible if these funds were used in ways that would better meet our current needs and benefit all children reviewed, not just one segment of the foster care population. One additional Review Board Coordinator and

three additional Boards in the 16th, 13th and 7th circuits are planned and we hope to have them each operational by January 1, 2007. State funds previously allocated as match for the Medicaid contract will be used to cover the cost of these changes as described.

Our strong advocacy efforts and follow-up for children placed in therapeutic placements funded by Medicaid will continue. Actually, we hope to be doing even more for these children than we were able to do in the past. As you encounter concerns on these cases at your board meetings, continue to make your referrals and we will make sure appropriate follow-up happens for them.

The 2006-2007 Annual Report is complete and it looks great! Start your efforts now to secure a spot on an upcoming meeting agenda of your local legislative delegation. Your participation in so many of these meetings last year was one of the strongest advocacy statements we have ever made. For 2007, let's make sure **every** delegation hears from you and learns about the hard work you do! I'll be eagerly anticipating your calls and look forward to supporting you at these meetings!

By speaking up and speaking out for our kids, **you** are making a difference.

Foster Care Review Board Program Staff			Staff Happenings !
Division Director	Denise T. Barker	dbarker@oepp.sc.gov	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Stephen Clyburn, Program Supervisor, was recently named SC Youth Soccer Association Volunteer of the Year!! Stephen also graduated from the SC Certified Public Manager program in May of this year. ◆ Michelle Dhunjishah has been promoted to General Counsel for the Review Board. ◆ Catherine Warner is the newest RB Coordinator, working with Review Boards 2A, 2B, 9B, and 9E.
Business Manager	Tonya Landrith	tlandrith@oepp.sc.gov	
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Review Board Coordinators	Berthena Livingston	blivingston@oepp.sc.gov	
	DeLisa Stallings	dstallings@oepp.sc.gov	
Administrative Assistants			

Strictly by the Board

News from the State Board of Directors

By **Vernon McCurry**, *State Board of Directors*

The State Board was very pleased to see many of you at our conference in April. It was an exciting time for all of us to come together and learn about new initiatives, as well as to learn from one another. Your thoughts and ideas are critical to our having the best program possible.

Following our Board meeting in January, the State Board met with Governor Mark Sanford in his office at the Statehouse. The purpose of our visit was to present a copy of the Annual Report to the Governor and to update him as to the activities of the Review Board. In addition to giving the Governor a brief update as to the purpose and function of the Review Board, each Board member had a few minutes to speak about various points. We told the Governor about the success of the Partners' Meetings taking place around the state, gave him examples of some of our community projects and supplied data on the number of annual hours volunteered by Review Board members. The Board urged the Governor to use our information as a resource as he dealt with future children's issues and we were very pleased at his willingness to hear what we had to say. The State Board will attempt to schedule this type of meeting with the Governor annually.

We are happy to welcome Ken Mance to the State Board of Directors as the new representative for the 6th Congressional District. Ken currently serves on the 3A Board that reviews Clarendon and Williamsburg Counties. As a school administrator and classroom teacher in the public schools, Ken has long exhibited his dedication to children in South Carolina. He brings many skills and strengths to the Board and we look forward to his participation on the State Board.

A new slate of officers was approved by the State

Board at our last meeting. I am honored to continue serving as chairperson of the Board. The other Board officers are Dot Bailey, vice-chair and Sissy Brock, secretary. Please feel free to contact any of us at any time.

As always, I thank you all again for the time and commitment you bring to this program. Without you, there would be no external system of accountability for children in foster care in South Carolina.



State Board Meeting with Governor Sanford in January

State Board Members

Vernon McCurry, *Member at-Large, Chairperson*

Dot Bailey, *4th Congressional district*

Martha Brock, *5th congressional district*

Kenneth Mance, *6th congressional district*

Burnet Mendelsohn, *1st congressional district*

Louise McFarland, *2nd Congressional district*

Anne Thayer, *3rd congressional district*

ARE YOU INTERESTED IN BECOMING A REVIEW BOARD VOLUNTEER?

- ◆ You need to be at least 18 years of age and able to commit to spending one day per month reviewing cases. You will be given an opportunity to work with others in the child welfare system to bring about positive change for foster children.
- ◆ Each review board member is appointed by the Governor, upon the recommendation of legislative delegations, and is required to reside in the judicial district of the review board.
- ◆ For more information, call the Governor's Office Foster Care Review Program at 803-734-0480, or contact your local legislative delegation.

South Carolina Heart Gallery

By Millie Qualls RB Coordinator

The SC Heart Gallery continues to increase awareness about foster children and raise interest in adoption. As a result of the Columbia exhibit last November seven children have adoptive families selected and 16 children have families that have inquired or expressed an interest in adopting. A new photo exhibit will be unveiled on July 10th at Mt. Pleasant Towne Center, 1600 Palmetto Grande Drive, the former Casual Corner location, and continue through August. A Heart Gallery exhibit that opened May 15th will continue through August 31 at the South Carolina Children's Theatre, 153 Augusta Street, Greenville.

On June 3rd the SC Heart Gallery website posted a record high of 290 visits for one day! Most likely a direct result of the 20/20 update that aired on June 2nd.

For additional information and to learn more about adoption recruitment, you may contact any of the DSS Adoption Offices listed below, on the web at www.state.sc.us/dss/adoption, or visit scheartgallery.org.

Region I Adoption Services, Greenville

1-800-868-6595 or (864) 241-1070

Region II Adoption Services, Columbia

1-888-711-7095 or (803) 929-2555

Region III Adoption Services, Charleston

1-800-922-1518 or (834) 953-9750

Region IV Adoption Services, Florence

1-800-763-6637 or (843) 661-2495

Bridges to a Brighter Future

By Ron Rossi, Sr., Review Board 13B, Greenville

In August 2005 I read an article in the Greenville News, written by the Director of this program. As a result of a generous gift from a Greenville woman, the endowment was established at Furman University, which supports this program.

"Bridges to a Brighter Future" is a three year pre-college academic enrichment program at Furman University for Greenville County high school students whose family income is below the poverty level and/or whose parents did not attend college. Starting in the summer before 10th grade, students participate in a four-week residential experience on campus. This continues for the next two years, provided the student remains qualified for the program. Certified teachers conduct core and elective classes, and various activities and visits to colleges round out the program. During the school year program staff members with students at their school, and twice a year students return to the campus for reunions.

Many of the children whose cases we review are included in the criteria noted above. We have also noted during our reviews that a few of the children attending high school were achieving 3.0 and above grade point averages. Two members of Review Board 13B (Doris Blazer and myself) met with Gary Ray, Greenville DSS Director, Emaline Burnette, Greenville DSS Program Coordinator, Vernon McCurry, Review Board 13C and State Board of Directors, and Tobi Swartz, Director of the program. As a result of this meeting, caseworkers at Greenville DSS will be advised of the details of this program and asked to submit names of qualifying foster care high school students as potential candidates.

Listed below are similar type programs other review boards may want to pursue.

PRIVATELY FUNDED PRE-COLLEGE ENRICHMENT PROGRAMS:

CHAMPS - Presbyterian College. Program for Laurens County

Emerging Scholars - Clemson University. Program for students in Allendale, Jasper, and other counties in the southern part of the state.

FEDERALLY FUNDED PROGRAMS:

South Carolina Upward Bound Programs: Benedict College, Claflin University, College of Charleston, Florence-Darlington TEC, Greenville TEC, Horry-Georgetown TEC, Midlands TEC, Morris College, Piedmont TEC, Technical College of the Lowcountry, Tri-County TEC, USC (Columbia, Lancaster, Upstate), Voorhees College, and Williamsburg TEC.

South Carolina Educational Talent Search Programs: Benedict College, Claflin University, Florence-Darlington TEC, Horry-Georgetown TEC, Midlands TEC, Piedmont TEC, Technical College of the Lowcountry, Tri-County TEC, Trident TEC, USC Columbia, Williamsburg TEC, and York TEC.

Review Board Round-up

By Foster Care Review Board Coordinators

- ♦ **Review Board 3A:** Board Members, many being educators, have provided books to foster children. *Amanda Reich*
- ♦ **Review Board 3B:** Board Members purchased paper, rulers, pencils, pens, and other school supplies for foster children beginning school in August. The supplies were presented to DSS on July 11th. *Michelle Crowder*
- ♦ **Review Board 4A:** Board Members adopted a family and provided gifts at Christmas. *Amanda Reich*
- ♦ **Review Board 5D:** Board Members participated in the Richland County FCRB 2006 Graduation Service Project, a collaborative effort with businesses and individuals celebrating young adults that have met challenging goals despite being in foster care. Baskets were presented to 15 graduates. *Lisa Southworth, RB 5D*
- ♦ **Review Board 5E:** Board Members provided Easter Baskets to foster children in Kershaw County. *Amanda Reich*
- ♦ **Review Board 7A:** Board Members actively participate in quarterly meetings, and attend court hearings to advocate for permanency for children they review. Katie Wofford collects donations for the Children's Closet. Board Members hosted an appreciation breakfast for DSS, MTS and Adoption workers. The board will collect school supplies and back-packs for foster children in Spartanburg County. Board Members presented the Annual Report to the local delegation. *Stephanie Spink*
- ♦ **Review Board 7B:** Board Members actively participate in quarterly meetings and monthly foster parent meetings in both Spartanburg and Cherokee counties. They attend court hearings to advocate for permanence for children they review. They attended a legislative breakfast in January and presented the Annual Report. Zora Massing and MaryAnn Riley attended the SC Voices for Children meeting in March. The Board is preparing for their annual "Back to School Drive", collecting school supplies for foster children in Cherokee County. *Stephanie Spink*
- ♦ **Review Boards 9A, 9C, and 9D:** Board Members established an account to receive donations on behalf of foster children in Charleston county. The Board recently authorized funds for children attending Girl Scout Camp, a child traveling to California, and gift cards, books, and other supplies purchased for children. *Sandy Marcengill*
- ♦ **Review Board 10A:** Board Members prepared tote bags for foster children in Oconee County. Each child entering foster care will receive a bag filled with toys, shoes, clothing, and a teddy bear. *Michelle Crowder*
- ♦ **Review Boards 10 B and 10C:** Board Members collaborated on a service project to provide personal items for children removed from homes where Meth or a Meth lab is present. A child's personal belongings can not be removed because of the Meth residue. Board Members collected over \$2,000 and received donated items of wash clothes, towels, toothbrushes, toothpaste, and shampoo and presented billed bags to the Anderson DSS County Director on May 9th. *Michelle Crowder*
- ♦ **Review Board 11B:** As a service project, the Board provided items to the McCormick Children's Home. *Amanda Reich*
- ♦ **Review Board 12A:** Board Members collected Wal-Mart gift cards for foster children in Florence County, and hosted a Valentine's Day appreciation breakfast for DSS, MTS, and Adoption workers. Betty Hester actively participates in quarterly meetings with DSS, GAL, and Adoptions. *Stephanie Spink*
- ♦ **Review Board 12B:** A DSS licensing worker recently praised Board Members for their excellent teamwork and support. In April Board Members attended the "Light of Hope" ceremony recognizing Prevent Child Abuse Month, and Linda Godfrey assisted at one of the booths, helping to recruit foster/adoptive parents. In May Board Members attended the Marion County Foster Parent and Guardian ad Litem banquet. Board Members partnered with DSS and the FPA to provide foster children a summer educational outing. Board Members actively participate in quarterly community stakeholder meetings. *Stephanie Spink*
- ♦ **Review Board 13B and 13C:** In March Board Members contributed money to purchase approximately 42 pairs of new shoes for foster children at Shoe Carnival, Cherry Dale Shopping Center. During the summer, Greenville Events, Inc. sponsors weekly events featuring entertainment, food, and drinks. Local non-profit organizations provide volunteers for each event in exchange for "tip jar" donations. Recently, several board members volunteered with the Greenville County Foster Parent Association for "Jazz Night", collecting \$526.19 in tips for the Association. *Ron Rossi, RB 13B*
- ♦ **Review Board 15A:** The Board has provided gift cards to children entering care in Georgetown County. *Amanda Reich*

Foster Care Review News and Views: Added Value: What's Your Board's Score ?

By Beth Green, Program Director



Can you believe that we are on the downhill side of 2006? And what a ride it has been! The momentum continues to build as local review boards meet with community partners, communicate with local legislative delegations, complete service projects, attend court hearings, etc. No doubt these efforts are positively impacting children in foster care.

At Chairpersons' Training, in December 2005, the State Board of Directors charged all local review boards with adopting and completing an annual "Self-Assessment Plan". The "Self-Assessment Plan" contains three core activities: (1) Attending a local legislative delegation meeting and presenting the FCRB Annual Report, (2) Submitting quarterly reports to the local legislative delegation, and (3) Completing a community-based service project. There is also a section for additional activities, such as attending quarterly meetings, court, etc. Chairpersons were asked to meet with their boards, plan and establish time frames for completing activities, and submit the board's "Self-Assessment Plan" to State Office by March 2006. I am pleased to report that most local review boards developed and submitted plans for this year.

It is now time for each local review board to document the completion of activities and submit the **"Self-Assessment Plan" to me by October 15th**. Any activities completed after October will be reported on next year's Plan. It is important that each board report their activities as this information is used in the FCRB Accountability Report and Annual Report. Local review board members are also encouraged to report hours spent on FCRB activities (other than Review Board meetings) on the **"Volunteer Hour Time Log"**. Both reports are important tools for demonstrating the "added value" of citizen volunteers to the Child Welfare System. We know that you add value, but let's prove it through conscientious reporting.

Thank you for your commitment to the children and families in your communities. You are my heroes! I look forward to receiving your reports and compiling the SC FCRB volunteer activities.

2006 FCRB Annual Conference (continued)

The lunch program included numerous awards, honors, and special recognitions. RB 10B, Anderson County, was named the 2005 Review Board of the Year. **Carolyn Payton-Pinson**, RB 10B, and **Joan Youmans**, RB 14A, were named 2005 Review Board Members of the Year. **Louise (Weezie) McFarland** was honored for her service on the State Board of Directors, and **Melissa Dunlap** was recognized for her ten years of service as General Counsel to the Review Board.

Following lunch **Stephen Clyburn**, FCRB Program Supervisor, shared results from the FCRB Survey and the Stakeholder Survey. Mr. Clyburn provided valuable insight into how local communities perceive the review board's involvement in child welfare issues.

Vernon McCurry, State Board Chairman, concluded the conference with "Why Do I Serve on a Foster Care Review Board"? Mr. McCurry shared his passion for serving on the Review Board, and he encouraged local board members to demonstrate "Positively Outrageous Service" in their communities. **Alyson Wissinger**, RB 6A, shared information about Foster Care Month and encouraged conference attendees to find ways to increase awareness about foster care issues in their communities.



2006 Annual Conference Attendees

Committed to Kids! Smiling New Faces

New Review Board Members:

17 new local review board members, and one staff member, have attended orientation. Please welcome:



June Bond, 7A, Spartanburg
Lois Dennis, 9B, Berkeley
Jan Moore, 9B, Berkeley
David Fitzpatrick, 9E, Berkeley
Samuel Felder, 1A, Calhoun/Oburg



Gary Williams, 5D, Richland
Linda Cecil, 14B, Beaufort/Jasper
Susan Williams, 14B, Beaufort/Jasper
Linda Puglia, 15C, Horry
Max Kaster, 1A, Calhoun/O'burg
Pequita Stukes, 3B, Lee/Sumter
Cassie Barber, 5B, Richland



Todd Stephens, 7A, Spartanburg
Courtney Madden, 13B, Greenville
Cathy Warner, RB Coordinator
Carolyn Baker, 1B, Dorchester/Oburg
Melinda West, 1B, Dorchester
Vickie Vernon, 5C, Richland

Orientation training is mandatory for all incoming board members and is offered at least four times each year. If you have review board members who have not completed this training, please encourage their attendance. Volunteer GALS and Guardian Ad Litem staff are welcome to attend; please call to reserve a space. **The next New Member Orientation is September 25, 2006**

Legal Lines: Legislative and Case Law Updates

By Michelle Dhunjishah, General Counsel

State Legislative update

The 116th Legislative Session adjourned in June and any bills pending or still in committee "died" since 2006 was the final year of the two-year session.

- Jessie's Law, which requires mandatory minimum sentencing for pedophiles and the death penalty for certain repeat offenders, passed and was signed into law by the Governor.
- A child hearsay exception for criminal court proceedings was passed.
- Daniel's law, which applies in cases where parents leave infants at hospitals, was expanded to include law enforcement agencies, fire stations, emergency medical services stations, and a staffed houses of worship as safe havens for parents to leave infants. Daniel's law provides immunity from prosecution for abandoning the child if a parent leaves an infant in the physical custody of a staff member of a safe haven.

Family Court reform, which was addressed in Senate Bill 1050 and House Bill 4841, did not pass. Senate Bill 1050 made it out of the Senate, but did not pass the House. House Bill 4841 never made it out of the House Judiciary committee. I expect this legislation to be re-introduced during the next legislative session.

Federal Legislative update

Congress passed the Safe and Timely Interstate Placement of Foster Children Act (HR 5403) and it became law on July 3, 2006. The new federal law requires states to complete home studies requested by another state within sixty days, and it authorizes \$1500 incentive payments for home studies completed within thirty days. It requires child welfare case workers to visit foster children placed outside the state twice a year instead of once a year. The law also makes it clear that foster parents, pre-adoptive parents, and relative caregivers have the right to be heard at foster care proceedings, instead of having the mere opportunity to be heard. This new language is consistent with South Carolina Code Section 20-7-645 which gives foster parents, pre-adoptive parents, and relatives providing care for the child the right to attend hearings. Congress also encouraged states to adopt the revised version of the Interstate Compact for the Placement of Children that the American Public Human Services Association recently ratified.

**South Carolina Governor's Office
Division of Foster Care Review**

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**Visit us on the Web:
[www.govoep.state.sc.us/
children/foster.htm](http://www.govoep.state.sc.us/children/foster.htm)**

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Review Board Calendar

Labor Day	Sept 4	State Office Closed
Foster Care Review Board	Thurs	8:30 am
Regional Training	Sept 14	Marion County Hospital
Foster Care Review Board	Thurs	8:30 am
Regional Training	Sept 21	Phoenix Center Greenville
Foster Care Review New Member Orientation	Mon Sept 25	10:00 am - 3:00 pm Edgar Brown Building
Foster Care Review Board	Thurs	8:30 am
Regional Training	Oct 12	Lexington Baptist Church Lexington
Foster Care Review Board	Fri	8:30 am
Regional Training	Oct 13	Trident TEC Charleston
	Thurs	12:00 pm
State Board of Directors	Oct 19	
	Fri	8:30 am
	Oct 20	Columbia
Veteran's Day	Nov 10	State Office Closed
Thanksgiving Holidays	Nov 23 Nov 24	State Office Closed

Advocates is published semi-annually by the South Carolina Governor's Office. The deadline for submission of articles for the next issue of *Advocates* (Winter 2007) is January 19, 2007.

Anyone wishing to submit an article should contact *Advocates* editor Lisa Vosburgh. Call 803-734-0474, or send an e-mail to lvosburgh@oepp.sc.gov.

The publisher reserves the right to make the final determination as to the content of each issue. Articles submitted are subject to editing and are not guaranteed inclusion.

NOTICE:
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